

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9021

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 1093

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, EAIR, AR
SUBJECT: CIVIL AVIATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS

1. ACCOMPANIED BY THE ECOM COUNSELOR AND THE AIR ATTACHE, I CALLED YESTERDAY ON AIR FORCE COMMANDER BRIG. GEN. AGOSTI TO REQUEST REMOVAL OR AT LEAST POSTPONEMENT OF THE ENFORCEMENT OF QUOTAS RECENTLY IMPOSED BY GOA ON BRANIFF'S FIFTH FREEDOM TRAFFIC FROM BUENOS AIRES TO LA PAZ AND SANTIAGO. I TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITY TO MENTION TO AGOSTI THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE CONTEXT OF OUR BROADER BILATERAL RELATIONS.

2. IN CONNECTION WITH THE BRANIFF MATTER, WE EMPHASIZED THAT THE SUDDEN IMPOSITION OF QUOTAS, WHICH WOULD CUT BRANIFF'S FIFTH FREEDOM TRAFFIC BETWEEN THE POINTS IN QUESTION DOWN TO 1/3 OF WHAT IT WAS LAST YEAR, CONSTITUTED IN OUR VIEW AN ALTERATION OF THE STATUS QUO WHICH PREVAILED AT THE END OF OUR AVIATION TALKS OF A YEAR AGO. WE RECOGNIZED THE HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS OF THIS QUOTA REGIME, BUT FELT THAT IN RETURN FOR THE LACK OF U.S. RESTRICTIONS ON AEREOLINEAS ARGENTINAS, U.S. CARRIERS SHOULD BE EXEMPT. WE SUGGESTED THAT
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AT LEAST A POSTPONEMENT OF THE ENFORCEMENT OF THESE QUOTAS WOULD BE IN ORDER PENDING THE RESUMPTION OF BILATERAL TALKS. IT SEEMED LIKELY TO US THAT IF THE QUOTA PROBLEM WERE ALLOWED TO GO UNRESOLVED, US AVIATION AUTHORITIES WOULD BE FORCED VERY SHORTLY TO INVITE ARGENTINE CARRIERS TO SHOW CAUSE WHY COUNTERVAILING RESTRICTIONS SHOULD NOT BE IMPOSED

AGAINST THEM.

3. I POINTED OUT THAT WITH THE ISSUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS LOOMING LARGER AS A PROBLEM IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS, IT WOULD SEEM THE BETTER PART AT THE MOMENT TO AVOID CREATING OTHER IRRITANTS IN FIELDS SUCH AS CIVIL AVIATION.

4. BRIG. GEN. AGOSTI REPLIED THAT HE COULD NOT GIVE ANY COMMITMENT CONCERNING THE CIVIL AVIATION PROBLEM. WITH WHICH HE WAS ONLY GENERALLY FAMILIAR, BUT THAT HE WOULD STUDY THE MATTER IN DETAIL AND GIVE USE A PROMPT ANSWER. HE COMMENTED THAT IN HIS VIEW SOLUTIONS IN THE AVIATION FIELD WOULD PROBABLY NOT CONTRIBUTE VERY MUCH TO A SOLUTION OF THE OVERALL QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, WHICH IS MUCH MORE SERIOUS AND BROADER AND ARTICULATED AT A HIGHER LEVEL. IN ANY EVENT, HE AGREED COMPLETELY WITH ME THAT IT WOULD BE WELL AT THIS TIME TO AVOID OTHER DISAGREEMENTS. I TOLD BRIG. GEN. AGOSTI THAT I BELIEVED THE US GOVERNMENT WOULD HOLD OFF RETALIATORY ACTIONS PENDING HIS STUDY OF THE AVIATION PROBLEM.

5. IN THE COURSE OF FURTHER DISCUSSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE I TOLD AGOSTI THAT THERE ARE TWO MATTERS WHICH MY GOVERNMENT BELIEVE ESSENTIAL TO IMPROVEMENT OF THE ATMOSPHERE. FIRST WAS PUBLICATION OF LISTS OF PRISONERS HELD, AND THE CONFIDENTIAL

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SECOND PUBLIC REPUDIATION OF THE ACTIONS OF THE RIGHT-WING TERRORISTS. AGOSTI HAD NO FURTHER COMMENTS OTHER THAN TO ASSURE ME HE WOULD BE IN TOUCH WITH US ON THE CIVIL AVIATION MATTER.
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